

1997-1998 BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Name of Principal: Ms. Karen Russ, Principal

Name of Schools: Assumption High School

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PART III - SUMMARY

Assumption High School is a private, Catholic secondary school located in Louisville, Kentucky. Established in 1955 by the Sisters of Mercy, the school is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. This year Assumption serves 916 young women in grades 9-12 who come from across Louisville and Jefferson County, as well as the surrounding counties of Bullitt and Oldham in Kentucky and Clark County in Indiana. Enrollment this year also includes one student from Bosnia, one from the Ukraine, one from Taiwan and two from England.

Located a quarter-mile north of the Watterson Expressway that circles Louisville, Assumption is accessible by the city bus system. It is neighbor to an elementary school, a Montessori school, a regular pre-school and a day care. Numerous small businesses are in close proximity to the school. The school is at the corner of Tyler Lane and Bardstown Road. The latter is a major thoroughfare in Louisville and Jefferson County.

Students represent a wide range of socioeconomic levels, from single-parent families with incomes as low as \$12,000 to a few dual career families with incomes exceeding \$200,000. The estimated income of the majority of families is in the \$40,000 to \$70,000 range. This year 120 students are receiving an average of \$1,200 each in financial assistance.

Student retention is good throughout the four years of high school with 97% of the students returning for the 1997-98 school year. The two major reasons for student transfers are tuition and job-related family moves out of the area.

In its 42-year history, Assumption has grown steadily. In the last five years the enrollment increased 16%. Current enrollment is the largest in the history of the school. To accommodate this growth a new 11,300-sq. ft. addition was built in 1995, and additional faculty and staff have been hired. The student-teacher ratio throughout this growth has remained low (16-1). The curriculum and extra- and cocurricular activities have been expanded to meet the needs of more students. In order to ensure a personalized educational approach, a Teacher-Advisor Program is being implemented this year.

In the community, Assumption has a reputation for being a school that meets the individual needs of the students it serves. This is accomplished by staying in touch and current with the research and practices that ensure individual student growth in a rapidly changing world. Assumption adopted a block schedule in 1996-97. This schedule provides students more academic success, better preparation for college and career, and more opportunities to take additional elective courses. It allows for more in-depth study and more diversified teaching approaches. Primarily, it promotes student-centered rather than teacher-centered learning. Greater awareness of the needs of students with learning differences resulted in the part-time learning differences director position becoming full-time. The students with limited English proficiency are assigned a qualified teacher to assist them during their transition to an English speaking school. Plans for providing an achievement center for underachieving students are being pursued. The special needs of the gifted and talented are also being studied with plans to better meet their needs. Programs and/or special services for the underachiever and the gifted should be in place for the 1998-99 school year.

Realizing the significant role of technology in today's world, and the importance and value of utilizing technology to improve student learning, Assumption now has two full-time technology resource persons on the staff. Their responsibilities include developing a long-term plan for using computers, CD-ROMs, videodiscs, and other technologies in all aspects of the teaching-learning process, and assisting teachers with the implementation of this plan. In the Louisville area, Assumption is a forerunner in the accessibility and use of technology in the classroom.

Assumption is also perceived by the community as a school with high student expectations, a caring and competent faculty, effective administrative leadership, and strong parental support and involvement. Receiving the Blue Ribbon Award in 1989 and 1993 has served to make the broader community aware of Assumption's strengths.

PART IV - VISION STATEMENT

The primary goal of Assumption High School, a Catholic secondary school for young women in grades 9-12, is to educate the whole person in a caring, Christian environment. Assumption provides all of its students with opportunities for academic excellence, cocurricular involvement, service learning, as well as personal, emotional and spiritual growth and development. Each student has the opportunity to develop as an individual.

The academic program is designed to meet the needs of students with varying abilities and talents. The school is a learning community committed to preparing each student for the next stage of life. Helping students understand and assume their roles as members of a global society is important at Assumption. Awareness of current events, elections of public officials, service to the community, environmental concerns and other global issues are all part of the students' education. Assumption students are encouraged to be leaders and doers. They are expected to become productive members of society.

Assumption is committed to providing financial assistance to families demonstrating economic need. In order to maintain a socioeconomic mix of students, the total amount of aid provided increases each year.

The school operates yearly in a financially stable manner. Budget allocations will be adequate to maintain current technology and to provide for ever-changing technology needs. Technology will be a major part of the continuous professional development plan for teachers.

The school's greatest strength is a faculty and staff committed to students and their success as individuals, women, Christians, and citizens of the United States and the world.

PART V – LEARNING-CENTERED SCHOOLS CRITERIA

A. STUDENT FOCUS AND SUPPORT

A1. What are the goals for and needs of your students? How does your school develop and maintain awareness of student goals and needs, taking into consideration the most significant dimensions of student diversity?

The primary goal of Assumption High School is to educate the whole person. The goal for students is that they all have opportunities to be successful academically, participate in cocurriculars, and grow personally, emotionally and spiritually. They are expected to become productive members of society.

Teachers are committed to students and their success as individuals, and carefully monitor their progress and behavior. They submit referral cards to the Student Support Services Team (SSST) if they have any concerns about students. The SSST includes the dean of studies, dean of students, and the three student assistance counselors. They discuss the concerns and determine a plan of action to best meet the needs of the students referred.

Students complete teacher evaluations at mid-semester. This gives them the opportunity to identify areas where their academic needs are not being met. Teachers use the results to make changes that are in the best interest of their students. A Teacher-Advisor Program is being implemented this year. This program will also help identify the goals and needs of each student. (See A2)

The processes described above have created a greater awareness of the needs of students with learning differences and resulted in the part-time learning differences director position becoming full-time. The special needs of students with limited English proficiency also surfaced. These students are now assigned a qualified teacher to assist them. Plans for providing an achievement center for underachieving students are being pursued. The special needs of the gifted and talented are also being studied with plans to better meet their needs. Programs and/or special services for the underachiever and the gifted should be in place for the 1998-99 school year.

Another goal for students is that they be involved in cocurriculars. For this reason numerous activities are available and students who do not find an area of interest are encouraged to initiate a new one. (See A4)

A2. How does your school determine and address the developmental needs of students as they move through your school?

At the beginning of the 1997-98 school year, Assumption began a Teacher-Advisor Program to assist students in their transitions from year to year and from high school to college. Each teacher has 15 advisees that she meets with during homeroom and during three hour-long advisement periods. The goals of this program are to establish a home base for each student, bolster the student's sense of belonging to Assumption, signal appropriate personnel of any problems-in-the-making, assist the dean of studies with academic advising, and facilitate students as they compile their School-to-Career Portfolios. In this portfolio, students keep track of their grades, standardized test scores, learning styles, multiple intelligences and career interest inventories, organizations, leadership positions, awards, service hours, work, hobbies and college choices. With this information, students set goals for each year in school and their years after high school.

More than 97% of the students who enroll at Assumption graduate, and the school has had no dropouts. These statistics indicate that student support services are in place. Students who do leave the school participate in an exit interview and are recognized at the closing assembly.

Teachers meet monthly in department meetings to review curriculum so that it meets the developmental needs of all students. Curriculum is revised at the end of each year to meet the changing needs of

adolescents. Teachers also meet three times a year to discuss the needs of students on each level in the school. All students assess each class and teacher and each program during the school year. These evaluations are used to implement necessary changes.

Assumption is very attentive to the needs of its newest students. Incoming freshmen attend a week-long Summer Seminar where they meet teachers and administrators, become familiar with the school, learn how to succeed in high school and meet other students in their class. In addition, each freshman is assigned a “big sister”, a junior or senior, who gives peer guidance to ease the transition from grade school to high school. Assumption also brings the freshmen to school one day earlier than the other students so they can find their way around.

Students who transfer to Assumption are invited to attend a luncheon with the counselors before school begins and are invited to join a group that meets monthly to help them with their transition. The dean of studies provides a “buddy” for transfer students for the first weeks of school to ease the transition. Each teacher is given a list of transfer students at the beginning of the year in order to help them become acclimated to the school.

Foreign Exchange students meet with a teacher who has ESL experience once a week to assist with their transition to a new culture and school.

A3. What non-academic services and programs are available to support students, and how do they relate to the student goals and needs identified in A1 and A2?

Assumption educates the whole person in a variety of ways. Students who are dealing with divorce, loss of a parent or a family drinking or drug problem are invited to participate in groups offered by the student assistance counselors. Personal growth groups are offered to all students who are experiencing a difficult time with adolescent developmental tasks. A senior group is offered to all seniors to assist with the transition from high school to college. The counselors also offer individual counseling to students in crisis or distress. In the 1996-97 school year, 185 students participated in a counseling group and 708 students had an individual counseling appointment. To provide for the personal and emotional needs of a growing student body, a third full-time student assistance counselor was hired in the 1997-98 school year. The following additional services are available to the students:

1. SSST meets monthly. (See A1)
2. Peer tutoring is available for students performing poorly.
3. An achievement center is being developed for students who need supervised help with their studies.
4. A comprehensive drug and alcohol curriculum is offered in grades 9-12; a no-use message is integrated throughout the curriculum. Students serve as peer leaders in this program and in an AIDS awareness program; 49 students were peer leaders in the 1996-97 school year.
5. A core team of ten teachers, counselors and administrators assesses the healthy climate of the school on a regular basis and makes recommendations for programs and procedures.
6. The dean of students closely monitors all tardies and absences from school and involves the family and students as soon as an at-risk pattern begins. Parents are involved in school-initiated conferences concerning tardies, absenteeism, and discipline problems.
7. Students also have a voice in the administration of the school through the Student Faculty Advisory Board that meets once a month to address students' concerns. SFAB consists of the principal, dean of students, dean of studies, one student assistance counselor, two faculty members elected by the faculty and six students selected by the Student Council and Class Officers.

A4. What cocurricular activities are available for students and how do they extend the academic curriculum?

In the past four years, Assumption has developed an effective system for encouraging participation in club activities. In September, a Club Fair is held during school hours so that every student can attend.

Each club makes a display that explains the mission of the club; in addition, the club's leadership is available to answer questions. Students are encouraged to visit each booth, talk with the club leaders, find out about the next meeting date and sign up as a future member. Those students who sign up receive a personal invitation to the first meeting of the club. Minutes of meetings and advertisements for events are posted on the Student Activities bulletin board in the cafeteria. This has been a very effective method of helping all students, especially freshmen, get involved.

In 1996, a survey of participation in cocurricular activities indicated that 67% of the student body participated in at least one club. Preliminary numbers for this year indicate that participation is 88%. The number of clubs has increased from 18 to 51 since the 1992-1993 school year. Of these new clubs, 14 were begun because of student interest and initiative: Big Sis Club, Dance Team, Environmental Club, Habitat for Humanity, Instrumental Ensemble, Intramurals, Kentucky Youth Assembly, Kentucky United Nations Assembly, Respect Life Club, Social Justice Club, Spanish Scrabble, Students with a Voice, Teenage Republicans, Videography Club and Young Democrats. Of the 51 clubs, 46 are direct extensions of academics.

In 1996-97, 263 students, 30% of the student body, participated on 20 different athletic teams. Tryouts for each team are open to all students. In addition, all students can participate in intramural sports.

A5. How has your school demonstrated a commitment to addressing the accessibility of its facilities and programs to students with disabilities?

An Arts and Sciences wing was opened in the 1996-97 school year and includes an elevator that makes the school accessible to students with physical disabilities. For the hearing-impaired student, typed daily announcements are provided and teachers wear auditory trainers while teaching.

Students with learning disabilities are identified as soon as possible. Upon enrollment, parents are asked to share any diagnostic testing for learning disabilities with the learning differences director. Placement of students in classes is accomplished after extensive conferencing with parents and former teachers and study of all test data. Presently there are 66 students with an identified learning disability enrolled. The coordinator provides the following services for these students, their families and teachers:

1. Confidential sharing of the student's learning profile with each of the student's teachers
2. Inservice for faculty members on the difficulties, strengths, learning and teaching styles and appropriate accommodations for each student
3. A credit class entitled Post-Secondary Planning which includes on-going development of learning styles, descriptions of learning differences, learning strategies and study skills, regular grade checks and goal setting, post-secondary preparation issues, social skills and self-esteem reinforcement. Currently 64 students participate in 13 Post-Secondary Planning groups. Each group meets for 35 minutes every four days.
4. Coordination of special testing opportunities
5. Facilitation of advocacy meetings between students and teachers
6. Leadership opportunities for students to help younger students with learning differences
7. Support group for parents

B. CHALLENGING STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

B1. How does your curriculum serve the broad goals for student learning and development that the public generally expects education to achieve: personal and intellectual growth, citizenship, and preparation for work? What relative emphasis do you place on these goals in your curriculum?

Assumption's curriculum is designed to develop independent-thinking young women able to participate responsibly in the workplace, the community, and the family. Both personal and intellectual growth are primary goals as Assumption seeks to educate the whole person.

The theology, campus ministry, retreat, and ACTS (A Christian Through Service) programs all help students to grow personally. Students are required to take theology all four years and experience such courses as Scripture, Affective Skills, Sacramental Life, Moral and Social Teaching, Religions of the World, Life Choices, and Death and Dying. The campus ministry department prepares liturgies for the Assumption community and provides outreach to students, faculty, and staff in need. AHS has a four-year overnight retreat program in which 98% of the students choose to participate. On retreat, students hear meaningful talks by student and faculty leaders, have time to reflect on their lives, and participate in prayer services. Many juniors and seniors are given the opportunity to develop leadership skills on freshman and sophomore retreats as small group leaders and presenters. Assumption's ACTS program helps students learn more about themselves by serving others in the community. The YES program is a one-year voluntary extension of this service. (See Part VI) Students develop ethical judgment through these opportunities and through others as well. For instance, science students debate such global issues as DNA testing and "the right to die," and journalism students must follow a code of ethics, a signed copy of which is kept in each journalism staff member's manual.

Other opportunities to develop citizenship skills include a required U.S. Government course that is designed to help the students understand the electoral process and current government issues. All social studies classes have a required current events component to help students understand their place in world events. Mock elections are held at the time of presidential elections and each year the student body elects its own leaders.

One program that Assumption has recently introduced to help facilitate student preparation for work is the School-to-Career Program that prepares students for life after high school. This program creates a smooth and successful transition from high school to college and to a career by providing school-based, work-based and service-based learning. Each student completes a School-to-Career Portfolio. (See A2) During freshman year, students are introduced to the idea of career awareness as they take learning styles and multiple intelligences inventories in order to gather more information about themselves. With this information they begin to set goals as they listen to speakers and do career lessons and activities in their classes. Sophomores continue their career exploration as they participate in service-based learning through the ACTS program. (See Part VI) The juniors begin to look more intensely into career opportunities as they take the Holland Self-Directed Search to see which careers match their personalities and styles of learning. Students then choose one career to center on in English classes where they write an I-search paper about their chosen career. Juniors also participate in a one-day job shadow experience in this career. Each senior takes the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory and looks at how personality preferences may influence job choice. During the 1998-99 school year each senior will have a mentor in her chosen field.

Technology is integrated into the curriculum in every department, and the latest hardware and software is made available to students so they can use it to research, process, and report their findings. Learning Internet research skills and participating in projects on the Internet prepares students as citizens in a global society. (See C4) Journalism students develop skills in using a variety of specialized technological hardware such as scanners and digital cameras and software such as Adobe PageMaker, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe PhotoShop, and ClickArt packages.

Additionally, Assumption's block schedule provides students with the opportunity to participate in various cooperative learning opportunities, simulation, critical thinking projects, and hands-on activities that prepare them for lifelike work situations.

B2. Successful schools offer all students opportunities to engage with significant content. How does your school ensure that students achieve at high levels in the core subjects?

a. English The English curriculum is writing-based and is built on the premise that writing skill and the writer's individual processes for writing develop over time when opportunities for practice and feedback are given. Curriculum requirements are sequenced so that students begin writing personal types of writing and move into more aesthetic and transactional/expository types. Students develop a portfolio all four years and are able to achieve and have individual learning needs met in a "writing workshop" format. Research and writing about research are sequenced to foster skill development over time. Freshmen write abstracts of research articles, and sophomores conduct research, develop a list of references, and make class presentations based on their findings. Juniors research and write "I-Search" papers about careers of their choice, allowing them to write in a personal voice while integrating information from a variety of sources, and seniors write traditional research papers in a formal, objective style. Independent novel reading is required to help achieve the department's goal of developing lifelong readers. In the study of literature, students move from personal response to analysis; writing about literature is encouraged. Freshmen study a genre approach to literature, sophomores read American literature, juniors explore British literature, and seniors study multi-cultural literature. Interdisciplinary connections are encouraged; for example, many sophomores taking a U.S. history course will read The Great Gatsby, or another novel that reflects a period of historical significance. Speaking skills are developed through both formal and informal speeches in English courses, and all students are required to take a semester of public speaking. Vocabulary is studied all four years.

b. Mathematics The mathematics curriculum involves a challenging variety of course work tailored to the ability levels of students. Accelerated math students take Advanced Geometry, Advanced Algebra II, Pre-calculus, AP Calculus or Finite Math. Students in the advanced track take Advanced Algebra I, Advanced Algebra II and Advanced Geometry, Pre-calculus, Calculus, or Finite Math. Honors level students take Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and Pre-calculus or Introduction to College Algebra. Academic level students take Algebra I part I, Algebra I part II, Geometry, and Introduction to College Algebra. Essential skills are taught by methods proposed in the NCTM standards. Teaching methods include the discovery method, inquiry learning, interactive CD-ROM's, videos, small group investigation, song and dance, inductive and deductive reasoning, homework groups, lecture, portfolios, timed tests, manipulatives, and drill and practice. In addition to these classroom strategies, the department also staffs Math Lab after school to help students who need it no matter what math course they are taking. Emphasis in instruction is on real-world application of concepts, and students are exposed to numerous opportunities to utilize technology as they learn through the use of TI-83 graphing calculators, Geometer's Sketchpad, Tesselmania, and Alge-Blaster. Algebra I summer work is required as preparation for Algebra II. Different math topics are integrated so that students can see the connection between such areas as algebra and geometry. Pre-cal and physics courses integrate material regularly.

c. Science The science curriculum also designs its course offerings by academic level. Advanced students take Biology I, Advanced Chemistry, and can choose from several electives: Physics, Anatomy, AP Biology, or AP Chemistry II. Honors level students take an Introduction to Chemistry and Physics (ICP), Biology, Chemistry and can also choose electives: Astronomy, Marine Biology, Human Physiology and Wellness, or Environmental Science. Academic level students take ICP, Biology, Chemistry in the Community, and choose from the same electives offered to honors students. By introducing ICP on the freshman level, a foundation is built and then expanded on during subsequent years. Both creative and analytical writing are included throughout all levels of the science curriculum. Creative writing may be on such topics as photosynthesis, cell organelles, and chemical bonding. Analytical writing is emphasized in the creation of lab reports and analysis of experiments and demonstrations. Science reasoning is encouraged during testing by incorporating sections in which students read passages and answer comprehension and logic questions. The science curriculum is integrated with other disciplines in several ways. For instance, students study infant mortality and other indices of life in foreign countries; they explore the historical aspects of the development of scientific ideas and current accepted theory, and they discuss the moral and religious implications of science issues.

The block schedule has also made it possible to do many hands-on activities, and the recently constructed Arts and Sciences wing of the school allows students to see demonstrations and conduct experiments with state-of-the-art equipment.

d. Social Studies The social studies curriculum promotes high achievement in a variety of ways. In addition to the World Civilization, U.S. History, Geography, and U.S. Government requirements, AP courses are offered in Psychology and U.S. Government and Politics. The department divides up various topics that will be taught. For example, World History classes focus on post-Renaissance history while Humanities begins with ancient studies. The Vietnam War is taught in U.S. History, and the Holocaust and World Wars I and II receive more focus in World History. Geography focuses more on non-Western areas and cultures while World History has a more Western focus. In this way students are exposed to many different topics but still have time to focus on them in a more in-depth manner. The freshman academic level history course is planned in conjunction with the academic level freshman English course. Courses have required current events and geography components, and all classes have public speaking and research activities. Additionally, a variety of innovative teaching strategies are used. Students participate in mock elections, debates, and speeches. They propose constitutional amendments and participate in mock trial activities. The department makes use of a substantial library of videos and support materials, and students frequently use the Internet and software in their study.

e. Foreign Languages The foreign language curriculum is designed so that learning in the target language is achieved through actions such as cooperative learning activities, spiraling concepts, the natural approach, and activities that develop critical thinking. Reading comprehension, listening, writing, and oral communication are pivotal areas in the foreign language curriculum. Writing skills in the target language are also developed, and revision is seen as an essential part of the writing process. This view is consistent with the writing instruction done by the English department. Challenging readings are assigned in order to encourage intelligent guessing based on contextual cues. The first year of the target language provides a foundation for more advanced study during the second year. College credit can be earned in advanced courses beyond the required two years. A fifth year is also available to students who began study of the target language in middle school and enter the second year course as freshmen. Foreign language study is integrated with other disciplines such as geography, history, art, and literature.

f. The Arts The fine arts curriculum has expanded greatly in the past year with the addition of a fine arts requirement and the expanded elective offerings available because of the eight-period block schedule. The music department went from employing a part-time to a full-time instructor. Chorus and advanced chorus are full-year courses. Chorus is designed for beginning singers and focuses on proper vocal production to produce good tone quality and basic music theory. Advanced Chorus is an auditioned choir and is open to those who have had one year of high school choral experience. Several new courses are now offered. The History of Rock and Roll focuses on how rock music began to develop into a recognized music form. Keyboarding is offered to students who have had no prior piano experience. Students learn the function of the piano keyboard, how to read and write music, and then play the music they write. All music courses provide opportunities for reading, writing, and application of learning. In addition to the technical aspects of music, students read and write about musicians and important contributions to the arts. Additionally, music courses seek to connect subject matter with other disciplines, namely history, geography, English, and mathematics. The art department has changed the year-long Art I-IV courses into semester subject matter classes. For example, Art I was changed to Fundamental Studio I (basic drawing and painting) and Fundamental Studio II (3-D studies). Once the student completes both fundamental classes, she may take any of the art electives. This freedom of choice allows a student to explore many different areas in art or to concentrate in a specialized area to develop her talent. Students have a choice of drawing, painting, or ceramics. Students read texts and art journals when studying artists and styles, and they write critiques and exhibition reports. Students also learn self-assessment skills as they are constantly asked to evaluate their own and others' work. Art

classes attempt to connect the material at hand with other content areas, especially history, geography, and physics. Especially effective features of the art program are the regular displays of student work, art shows, visits by guest artists, and field trips which include visits to museums, art galleries, and art studios.

B3. What other content areas play essential roles in your schoolwide curriculum goals?

The mission is to educate the whole person in a caring, Christian community; therefore, theology plays an integral role in the curriculum goals. As part of the 1996-2000 strategic plan, the theology department evaluated and revised the curriculum in light of the Catholic identity of the school. Freshmen take ½ credit of Scripture, a course where they explore the meaning of God's revelation within the context of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and ½ credit of Affective Skills that develops students' self esteem, ability to act responsibly, relate effectively, solve problems and set goals. Once the students have an understanding of the historical basis of their religion and have set goals, they participate in Sacramental Life, a one-credit course that explores the scripture basis for the seven Catholic sacraments. Students also participate in the ACTS program which provides them the opportunity to perform community service. (See Part VI) Juniors continue their service work through a one-credit course in Moral and Social Teaching, a new course this year, which challenges students to develop a global vision while acting locally. Students are required to perform 30 hours of social justice service; this service builds on the ACTS program that encourages students to use their gifts to serve. In the junior service program, students are asked to gather information and seek informed opinions as they serve. Therefore, they move from a personal view to a more global view. (See Part VI) Life Choices is a ½ credit course required of all seniors that prompts students to look for balance and wholeness in their lives as they make important decisions for their future. Seniors then elect either a ½ credit in Death and Dying which invites students to explore the reality of death in order to live the Christian life to its fullest, or a ½ credit in Religions of the World where students identify the significant cultural value and powerful motivating force that religion has been in shaping individuals and nations throughout history. Students purchase a bible freshman year and use it all four years. Scripture is used in the context of a particular course to enhance all topics. Students read the scriptural, theological and Catholic sources for the issues discussed, analyze how these readings affect their beliefs and explain in writing their stand on issues. Students keep a four-year journal that is used in all theology classes. The purpose of the journal is to develop intrapersonal skills and to think, analyze and reflect.

Another aspect of educating the whole person is preparing the student for the technologically advanced 21st century. Technology and computer literacy have been infused into the curriculum. The goals of the technology program are to integrate technology into the curriculum so that the electronic media is a tool for learning, to foster electronic research skills, encourage the use of technology to promote critical thinking and problem solving skills and to provide equipment that allows students to generate technologically advanced educational projects. In English classes students learn word processing so that the emphasis can be on expressing ideas clearly and not worrying about penmanship. Using CD-ROMs and the Internet in English, math, science and foreign language classes helps students hone their research skills so they can find pertinent information quickly and spend their time reading and understanding. The students take pride in presenting findings in classes with PowerPoint on the computer and television. The award-winning newspaper and yearbook use desktop publishing, a scanner and laser printer to publish in house.

Social studies classes go beyond memorizing facts by simulating the formation of a new country or passing a bill with programs like Building a Nation and Capital Hill. Geography and foreign language students use a multi-media electronic atlas on the network to gather data, study maps and understand the culture of other countries. Spanish students exchange e-mail with native Spanish speakers.

Math classes explore graphing and geometric concepts with TI calculators and computer programs, Geometers' Sketchpad and Tesselmania. Science students simulate time-consuming and/or dangerous

chemistry and physics experiments using computer based links. Computer generated projects such as creating charts and graphs from spreadsheets or using the networked CD-ROMs to research career possibilities, are a major component of every business course.

B4. What are your course requirements for graduation? To what extent do your school and students within the school exceed minimum state and/or district requirements?

Beginning with the class of 2000, Assumption students are required to have 28 credits to graduate. The additional requirements were phased in beginning with the class of 1997 that was required to have 25 credits, the class of 1998 is required to have 26 credits, and the class of 1999 is required to have 27 credits. The table below indicates requirements for the classes of 2000 and 2001.

Graduation Requirements

Subjects	State Requirements	District Requirements	School Requirements	% 1997 Grads Who Exceed School Requirements
English	4	NA	4	57.8
Mathematics	3	NA	4	23.8
Science	2	NA	3	73.5
Social Studies	2	NA	3	70.8
Foreign Language	0	NA	2*	28.7
The Arts	0	NA	.5	29.7
Physical Education/Health	1	NA	1	-
Vocational / Technical	0	NA	0	-
Computer Education	0	NA	1**	43.8
Philosophy / Religion	0	NA	4	-
Other /Public Speaking	0	NA	.5	-
Electives			5	-

* required of honors, honors1 and advanced level freshmen and sophomores

** required of academic level freshmen

B5. What is the process for continuing curriculum renewal at your school? What questions about curriculum is your school currently addressing?

Assumption has a curriculum committee that meets to set curricular goals, establish objectives for meeting those goals, and evaluate the progress made towards them. In addition, each department meets monthly, and departmental curriculum renewal is ongoing. Changes are made regularly to ensure that the curriculum meets students' needs, makes up for any deficiencies in standardized tests, and incorporates current research in the field.

For example, one class that has been changed from an elective to a requirement in **English** for all students this year is public speaking. Upon review of the skills students need in college and the workplace, namely poise, self-confidence, and the ability to think on one's feet, it was decided by the department and the administration that public speaking should be a mandatory course. This change has been well received by both faculty and students as each now feels more confident with the oral presentation components in other disciplines.

The **math** department has also undergone several curricular changes recently. All students now begin in Algebra I. Algebra I is taught over two years on the academic level. Graphing calculators have been introduced on the advanced and honors 1 levels, and more data and statistics have been incorporated which will aid in the graphing necessary for science classes. The math department advocates close adherence to the "more emphasis" and "less emphasis" parts of the NCTM standards while still keeping in mind what is necessary for national standardized tests.

The **science** curriculum has been expanded to include Introduction to Chemistry and Physics (ICP) on the freshman level. Studies show that during early adolescence, girls' interest in science declines, and they perceive themselves as unable to succeed in scientific fields. ICP is a way to present fundamental scientific principles in a hands-on and media-rich environment focused on problem solving. These basic skills serve as a foundation on which further studies of biology and chemistry can be built. The science department is currently involved in creating an "exit" instrument with which to evaluate students' understanding of core concepts in each required science course. Students' performance on this instrument will be used to study other possible curricular developments.

The **social studies** curriculum has also undergone recent changes. Students are now required to take a semester of geography which has a strong computer component. It is designed as a highly interactive course, and students are involved in field trips where they become more aware of community resources.

The **foreign language** department is currently updating its scope and sequence charts. New textbooks have recently been adopted to accommodate the needs of students in a block schedule and help students with different learning styles. The new textbooks encourage more speaking, listening, and reading in addition to writing. The department is researching the establishment of a language computer lab that will enable students to speak and listen more in the target language during class, after school or during study time. A grant is presently being written.

In the **fine arts** department, the curriculum has changed from year-long Art I-IV courses to semester, individual courses based on subject matter. Since ½ credit in fine arts is now required, Fundamental Studio I has been revamped to accommodate the student who is interested in studying drawing and painting but is not a proficient artist. In addition, new music courses have been offered to accommodate these students. (See B2)

B6. How do you ensure that diverse learners (e.g., students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, limited English proficient students, migrant students, and students placed at risk) all have the opportunity to learn challenging content and achieve at high levels?

Students with disabilities are enrolled in the program with our learning differences director. (See A5) Foreign exchange students are the only students who have limited English proficiency at Assumption. These students meet with a resource teacher who helps explain cultural differences that may arise in the classroom, serves as a liaison between the students and their teachers, tutors and helps them with their English proficiency.

Gifted students take advanced classes in English, math, science, social studies, foreign language, art, computer and music. Advanced placement courses through the College Board and college credit classes through Bellarmine College are offered. The class of 1997 earned 786 hours of college credit.

The curriculum committee is currently looking at a program for academically gifted students that would enable them to accelerate through high school and enter college with sophomore standing.

C. ACTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

C1. For three core subjects discussed in B2, what are the prevalent teaching practices and learning experiences in your school?

A writing workshop approach is used in **English** for the teaching of writing; this approach provides students with time, ownership, and response, which is based on the research of Graves, Murray, Calkins, Atwell and others. It reflects what is known about the ways students most improve their ability to write well. Students' ability develops over time and with practice; students write more and better when they

care about what they write and are allowed to choose their own topics; students improve more when given response to their writing than they do with intensive correction. A process approach to writing is used in the instruction of writing; this reflects research into the way “real” writers work. Writing is a recursive process involving drafting, revising, and editing. From these experiences, students learn that they have something worthwhile to say; they learn to express their ideas logically. Grammar is taught within the context of writing, which is aligned with almost fifty years of research about how students most effectively learn to use correct grammar. The teacher is seen as a coach who provides not only written response to students’ writing but conferences orally with students and encourages peer response as they write. In this way, students learn to write based on reader response, not just in pursuit of some elusive grade, and they are freed up to take “risks” in their writing which leads to valuable learning. All students develop a portfolio each year that uses both teacher evaluation and student self-assessment. This method helps students evaluate their progress as well as identify new instructional directions for the teacher. A number of English teachers use a transactional approach (response based) to the teaching of literature. Based on the work of Louise Rosenblatt and others, this approach acknowledges that meaning is created when the reader interacts with a text; before being asked to analyze a piece of literature, students respond to the literature in the context of their own life experiences. From these experiences, students learn to relate personally to what they read and to see the connections between what they read and their lives; they learn that meaning comes not from what the teacher says but from within. In this way, students move from response to analysis in the development of critical thinking skills. (See B2)

The **mathematics** department follows the guidelines of the Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1989). This document calls for more emphasis on the development of problem solving, communication and reasoning skills, and the making of more mathematical connections. In the implementation of the standards, students are required by teachers to be actively involved in their learning. In a cooperative setting, students are given hands-on activities that support both inductive and deductive methods of learning. Teachers believe that students’ construction of mathematics creates a learning environment in which students become increasingly independent in their work and in which students discover, see alternatives and construct new perspectives. While emphasis on common drill-and-practice activities is reduced, routine procedures are used to develop meaningful and useful mathematical knowledge. Reflection on how and why procedures work is utilized. The NCTM standards suggest that less time be spent on certain topics and more depth be given to others. In following these guidelines, teachers are using technology, both graphing calculators and computer programs to develop a deeper understanding of mathematics. In their choice of activities, teachers are gender sensitive and use real world situations that would appeal to their students. With emphasis on cooperative learning, writing essays and summaries, and portfolio projects, students are encouraged to interact and communicate for concept clarification and understanding. Probability and statistics/data analysis is integrated in all courses, and the department philosophy includes algebra for all students.

The **social studies** department has based its curriculum and instructional practices on the National Council for the Social Studies recommendations that ten thematic strands be used. These are: 1) culture; 2) time, continuity and change; 3) people, places, and environment; 4) individual development and identity; 5) individual, groups, and institutions; 6) power, authority, and governance; 7) production, distribution, and consumption; 8) science, technology, and society; 9) global connection; 10) civic ideals and practices (1994). The four required social studies courses, World History, U.S. History, Geography, and U.S. Government share the responsibility of addressing these strands although some strands relate more closely to certain subject areas (i.e. strands 1 and 3 to geography). Students are periodically allowed to select specific subject areas for more in-depth study. The four core required courses generally follow a chronological perspective. Students, through extensive use of simulations, problem-solving games and research activities, gain greater ownership for their own learning. These teaching methods also promote skills of cooperation, public speaking, writing, and shared decision making which are important life skills.

C2. Using the three courses from C1, why are the practices/experiences appropriate for your students?

The **English** department has structured its curriculum based on the research about adolescent readers and writers. Teaching writing through a workshop approach is appropriate for adolescent girls because they are of an age when they need to feel confident of their own voices. In a culture that often marginalizes women, it is vital that young women learn that they have something worthwhile to say and to help them develop the tools for doing so effectively. Research on adolescent girls has noted that during this period of their lives girls are vulnerable to losing their sense of self and having low self-esteem. It is essential that teenage girls feel that they are worthwhile people who can contribute positively to the world. The writing program as well as the independent reading component empowers girls to express themselves and to have a sense of ownership and control in their lives. Also, the movement from expressive forms of writing to more challenging transactional forms is developmentally appropriate. Therefore, the writing workshop provides a careful balance between the structure and freedom that adolescent learners need to thrive.

The **math** department has based its curricular decisions on the need for schools to produce individuals who can manipulate and communicate data in the workplace. While drill and practice may be one mode of presentation, emphasis is given to the real-world application of the concepts taught. The math curriculum seeks to develop skill in using technology as well as encourage reasoning skills that will serve students well in the future. The sequence of courses required for each ability level is developmentally appropriate and aims at connecting previous knowledge with new knowledge as well as integrating mathematics with science and other content areas.

The **social studies** department has structured its curriculum knowing that businesses want lifelong cooperative learners. The interactive projects and activities in social studies classes prepare students for the demands of work situations. The government and geography classes seek to develop individuals who understand how their own government works and its place in the global community. The current events component of all history classes develops students who are not only aware of the world in which they live but also are concerned about its welfare and direction. This enables individuals to become adults capable of making significant contributions to the social and political lives of their communities.

C3. In what ways do your teaching practices support student initiated learning?

At Assumption, classes are truly “communities of learners” in which students work together to learn and problem solve and are individually responsible for their contributions. The block schedule requires student-centered activities. This kind of student-initiated study is the norm, and teachers view their role as facilitators of learning rather than merely repositories of knowledge. Students work collaboratively in pairs or small groups to create choral readings, skits, projects and class presentations. At times they are allowed to choose the project or form of presentation to exhibit their learning. Also, math teachers no longer stand in front of the room working out difficult homework problems. Instead, homework groups work through difficult areas, and teachers move from group to group to facilitate the process. All departments make use of many active learning techniques: jigsaw techniques, group problem-solving activities, presentations, exhibitions, oral reports, group sharing of research findings, learning centers, peer tutoring, practice partners, role playing, and student-led instruction. The block resource person suggests applications of these active learning strategies in the weekly faculty bulletin, at faculty meetings, and at inservices. Assumption also seeks to hold students accountable for their learning. All classrooms have homework boxes where students pick up the work they missed during an absence. They are expected to be prepared for the next class. (See C1-2)

C4. As students and teachers engage in active learning, how are resources made available for gathering information and sharing the results of their work?

Assumption has school-wide category five wiring with a fiber-optic backbone that provides access to all networked software and the Internet from any room in the building. Two CD-ROM towers holding up to 16 CD's are networked. These include full-text magazine and newspaper indices, an encyclopedia, SIRS Government, Renaissance and Social Issues databases, Career and College Search CD's and Literature and Science databases.

One hundred and thirty computers are available to students and teachers including two labs of 30 computers each. Twenty classrooms have between 1 and 6 computers. All computers have the same word processing, spreadsheet and slide presentation programs. Overhead graphing calculators are available in all math classrooms, PC-TV duos are available for presentations and each classroom has a TV and VCR as well as an overhead and a tape/CD player.

The library is fully networked and has approximately 2,983 visits during each six-week period. In addition, students check out approximately 698 books per month.

C5. What questions about teaching and learning has the introduction of education technologies raised in your school and how have you addressed them?

(for technological applications see C4, for integration in the classroom see B3)

How do we make sure everyone has access? Every room is wired for at least six network drops and computers are added as the budget allows. Computers on rolling carts are available to be moved where needed. One computer lab and the library are open every period and before and after school.

Because technology is expensive, how do we ensure that we invest in the technology that is best for the students? A Technology Committee consisting of school and community members advises the technology coordinator on major purchases. All hardware that is purchased is upgradeable, and software is exploratory in nature and applicable to many subject areas. In addition, the technology coordinator invests in programs that allow the faculty and students to do something they cannot do as well by other means such as searching UMI Proquest on the Internet for current news articles.

What do we need to teach students about technology that will help them in the future?

To prepare the students for the future, Assumption uses programs that are widely used in the business world such as Microsoft Office, Internet Explorer and Adobe PageMaker. Instruction and opportunities to use technology are inherent in each subject area. Teachers stress the use of technology to develop higher level thinking skills. In addition, students are taught to question the "answers" they get using technology. Effective search skills to find pertinent information allow students time to focus on the meaning of the data and the value of the source. The school adopted an Internet Acceptable Use Policy last year that is driven by the principle that all students and teachers are to use the Internet for educational purposes that are consistent with the school's mission. This policy is reviewed in English classes each year.

How do we help our teachers and staff become computer literate?

The technology coordinator and the computer staff offer numerous workshops and demonstrations to help the beginners overcome their fears and want to become literate and help the newly literate become more proficient in word processing, electronic grading, the Internet, PowerPoint and other applications. Teachers are required to submit semester and final grades in electronic form. The technology coordinator provides after-school help for teachers who need it. In order to more efficiently meet the needs of the faculty and staff, a full-time technology assistant was hired this year. The school's local Internet provider, Iglou, issues free Internet accounts for teachers' homes and for the school.

D. SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND CULTURE

D1. How does the culture of your school support the learning of all its members?

Faculty and staff at Assumption seek to develop the whole student, not just develop skill in any one discipline or area. There are numerous ways this culture helps its members feel like they are vital parts of a community:

1. Summer Seminar (See A2)
2. Transfer Students (See A2)
3. Teacher-Advisor Program (See A2)
4. Student-Faculty Advisory Board (See A3)
5. School-to-Career (See B1)
6. Affective Skills (See B3)

The culture of Assumption is a very supportive one. Students and teachers treat each other with respect. For instance, when one student contracted leukemia, Assumption raised money for her, wore hats to support her in her chemotherapy treatments, and made a videotape wishing her well. Students who have suffered a personal loss such as a grandparent or parent are prayed for over the announcements. The student body participates in frequent drives and collections to help others in need. Through experiences such as these the students learn the vital human experience of being able to empathize with others. The retreat program provides students with opportunities to be themselves as whole people by placing an emphasis on the student as a person of faith and feeling. Students are provided a safe environment to nurture their relationship with self, others, and God.

There is also an atmosphere of fun at Assumption. Seniors have “crazy days,” and each class “celebrates itself” on one special day during the year. During Mercy week, the entire community celebrates its heritage and mission. Teachers put on a talent show for students every four years, and they participate in dance routines at pep rallies. Students often call their teachers “friends” whom they respect and admire. Additionally, interested faculty and staff can participate in prayer partners and Kris Kringle pairings at Christmas. The motto the principal repeats is that the school’s mission is to ensure that “every student every day learns and grows and feels good about herself.” The culture at Assumption makes this goal a reality.

D2. How does your school foster a caring community with engaged, sustained relationships among all its members?

Assumption fosters a caring community among the students, faculty and staff in a wide variety of ways. The school sponsors events that provide time for teachers to develop relationships among themselves, with the staff and the students. Faculty members gather at prayer groups and at retreats to pray together; they share concerns and needs with the administration at Faculty Advisory Board meetings, they support any member of the community who is celebrating a joyous event or mourning a sad event through the 5F committee. Food is provided after faculty meetings, during inservices and at beginning of the year, Christmas and end of the year luncheons. The entire community shares in liturgies, prayer services, assemblies and pep rallies.

a. What opportunities do students have to build sustained and caring relationships with teachers and other adults?

Students have many opportunities to build relationships with adults at Assumption. The Teacher-Advisor Program provides a mentor for each student in the school. (See A2) On retreats that last from 2-4 days, students work closely with the faculty and parent leaders. In addition, the counselors and deans meet regularly with students concerning personal as well as academic issues. The counseling department has an open door policy and students are encouraged to stop in to make appointments, ask questions or meet with the counselor on call. (See A3) Students also build relationships with teachers and adults through the strong cocurricular and sports programs. (See A4)

b. How does your school promote a healthy peer climate among the students?

Students are involved in the decision making process through the Student Faculty Advisory Board, Student Council and Class Officers. Students serve as peer leaders in the drug and alcohol program, and a peer mediation team is being developed this year. Students serve as peer tutors, big sisters and buddies to transfer students. (See A2 – A3)

Some students and staff realized last year that students with leadership potential were not being tapped; therefore, Assumption started an Ambassador program for seniors with untapped leadership ability. The ambassadors serve as guides for prospective students, ushers at assemblies, liturgies and other in-school events and good will ambassadors for community events. This program has helped 45 students feel included.

D3. How is your school organized to reflect differing student needs within the school's goals, priorities, and curriculum?

Placement of students in appropriate learning levels is a high priority. Students are placed in four academic levels for English, math, science, social studies and foreign language: advanced, honors 1, honors and academic. Incoming freshmen are placed in one of these levels for each subject based on four sources of information: placement test, grade school teacher recommendation, prior school success and student and parental input. Students are placed in levels where they can succeed; therefore, a student may be in advanced level math and honors level English. All levels give students an opportunity to fulfill the pre-college curriculum. As a student improves or experiences difficulty in a class, her schedule is altered quickly. Students are encouraged to see the dean of studies and request a change. Once the teacher and parent agree, the schedule is immediately changed. Students in the academic track are placed in honors English and social studies in the junior year and in honors math and science in the senior year. Therefore, 100% of the academic track moves to the honors track. There is no data from last year to indicate how many students moved to more challenging classes. However, so far this year 116 schedule changes have been made and 56 of those were for more challenging classes. Students have two weeks at the beginning of a course to drop/add, but if the student is experiencing difficulty or if a course is too easy, a student may move at any time.

The master schedule is established using a computer program called Win School. The students sign up for their required classes and then select the electives they want and list 3 alternatives. This information is then fed into the computer which develops the master schedule with as few conflicts as possible. After this step, the dean of studies ensures that students are able to take required courses and then the computer completes the schedule. Therefore, the schedule is developed with the student at the center.

D4. How are teachers hired in your school? How are teacher assignments made?

To recruit new teachers, the school advertises in local and state newspapers, including minority newspapers, and contacts education departments in local universities. Following a screening of resumes, candidates participate in an interview process that involves the principal, assistant principals and the department chairs. The Teacher Perceiver (SRI) is administered to top candidates. After checking references, group consensus by all interviewers determines selection.

Teacher assignments are made in the best interest of all students. Therefore, teachers are assigned to teach in the areas of their certification and experience. Teachers who have specialized training in areas such as learning differences, advanced placement, gifted education, drama, ESL, etc., are given assignments accordingly. Teachers are never given an assignment for which they have no preparation.

D5. What constraints does your school face in creating a community of learners? How does your school maintain a safe, orderly, and drug-free environment?

Assumption realizes that in many ways schools simply mirror society. One constraint that is constantly dealt with is the need to deal with the social pressure on students by outside sources to be more sexually

active or involved in chemical abuse. Assumption has responded through the Core Team, a group of administrators and counselors, that meets to develop strategies to ensure the safety of the students and encourage responsible decision-making. The Core Team has established a more restrictive dance policy and has increased the emphasis on adult supervision and liability. We currently have a smoke-free campus that extends to school functions off campus. Athletes also have a restrictive drug/alcohol policy that is in force when teams play at home as well as on the road. Assumption has prevention clubs such as SHOL (Students High On Life) and Peer Mediation. These groups organize Red Ribbon Week, the Great American Smoke-Out, and Prom Promise, a week in which students promise to be alcohol and drug-free on prom night. There are 30 active SHOL members and 49 peer leaders who pledge to be chemical free and help counselors encourage school participation. The federal law regarding weapons in school is posted clearly. Frequent fire, tornado, and earthquake drills and emergency plans are practiced so that everyone in the school will know what to do in an emergency.

One difficulty that any adolescent institution faces is creating a community of learners that makes students accountable for their actions by admitting the mistakes made, accepting the consequences, and learning from past mistakes. Assumption's discipline code encourages personal responsibility. By choosing Assumption the students and parents agree to be governed by the basic philosophy of the school, rules, procedures as well as its values. Each student is provided the opportunity to learn and develop the skills and self-discipline necessary for contributing to family and community life. A system of detentions, demerits and suspensions is the means by which a student is held accountable and given feedback on her behavior that may violate procedures and regulations. Teachers support this system of personal responsibility in dealing with any discipline problems in individual classes, and the dean of students supports teachers in this effort. Demerits accumulate over a four-year period with parents notified each time a demerit is issued. Students are given the opportunity to sign a Positive Behavior Contract in order to eliminate some demerits from their record. Summer parent-student conferences are required for those with more than six demerits. A plan of action is developed for the succeeding school year.

E. PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

E1. What opportunities do teachers and other staff have to build professional community(ies) that enhance their collective capacity to work together to support student learning?

There are several formal opportunities for faculty members to build professional communities. Each department meets monthly to share information, discuss field research, and assess curriculum. Teachers turn in lesson plans and unit plans to their department chair, and department chairs turn these in to the dean of studies. This allows for instructional feedback as well as provides a means for ensuring that the curriculum is taught and that "best practices" are employed. Department chairs meet every other month with the dean of studies to discuss curricular issues. In addition, the curriculum committee made up of the chairs of the core curriculum departments meets every other month to look toward the future of the school. Teachers are required to share what they learn from conferences, workshops or conventions with other faculty members through department and faculty meetings. Levels meetings (i.e. teachers of advanced, honors 1, honors, and academic levels) have been built into the schedule this year to allow teachers to collaborate on teaching strategies and progress of students. Teachers are asked to set instructional, professional, and personal goals at the beginning of each year and collaborate with an administrator in assessing progress towards these goals. Two percent of the schools budget is spent on professional development opportunities. (See E2)

Teachers also meet outside of departments in a variety of informal contexts. All teachers share at least one classroom with another teacher, usually someone in his/her department that allows for informal sharing. Teachers conference informally about current students that another teacher taught in the past. The learning differences director and counselors meet with teachers to discuss the needs of individual students. Faculty members also collaborate when working on retreats and the many activities of clubs

and organizations in the school. Faculty and staff can sign up to see any administrator for a conference as needed.

Several other collaborative activities have been undertaken. Last year, a group of about 15 teachers wanted to study the education of girls in particular. This group read various books about the subject (*Reviving Ophelia* by Mary Pipher, *The Difference* by Judy Mann) and then met three times during the year to discuss the books and how the ideas there might influence instruction. Inservice credit was given for this study group participation. From 1994-1996, four English teachers formed a study group to learn more about issues in English education. They met approximately six times during the year to share their findings and draw conclusions. Inservice credit was also granted for this. In addition to professional collaboration, the Assumption community also meets socially which develops a sense of community and belonging. These events include attending sporting events, participating in 5F (the group that celebrates happy events and helps the community grieve over sad ones), Friday after school get-togethers, “dive of the month,” refreshments after faculty meetings, a Christmas progressive dinner and luncheons provided by the school three times a year.

E2. How does a coherent approach to professional development for teachers and other staff ensure their ongoing learning? How do organizational arrangements such as time and teaching assignment, and school norms and culture make professional development a priority? Is there a long-term plan?

All teachers earn a minimum of 36 hours of inservice every two years. Most teachers exceed this requirement. Eighteen are planned inservice hours and 18 are flexible. Planned inservice hours are based on school-wide changes and on surveys of the faculty each year. Assumption moved to a block schedule and the building was networked during the 1996-97 school year. In addition, a Teacher-Advisor Program was adopted for the 1997-98 school year. The planned inservice has addressed teaching in the block, using technology in the classroom and the Teacher-Advisor Program. The professional development programs, provided for all faculty and staff over the last two years include:

1. Teaching in the Block – 10 hours – Summer, 1996 (required)
2. More Teaching in the Block – 3 hours – November, 1996 (flexible)
3. Using Thesis Marks – 2 hours – January, 1997 (required)
4. Using the Internet – 2 hours – February, 1997 (flexible)
5. The Internet – 3 hours – March, 1997 (required)
6. Technology in the Classroom – 6 hours – Summer, 1997 (required)
7. Teacher-Advisor Program – 3 hours – August, 1997 (required)
8. Teacher-Advisor Program – 3 hours – September, 1997 (required)

Assumption teachers participate in a wide variety of out-of-school professional activities. These activities are supported by the administration by funding each department to pay for each teacher’s membership in local and national organizations, funds for workshops, conferences, courses, etc. and subsidizing for substitutes. A few examples of professional development opportunities teachers have engaged in follow:

English Department

1. Greater Louisville English Council Omnibus Conference – (3 hours, 6 teachers)
2. Kentucky Council of Teachers of English Conference – (6 hours, 4 teachers)
3. National Council of Teachers of English Convention – (12 hours, 3 teachers)
4. Journalism Workshop at Indiana University – (40 hours, 1 teacher)
5. Holocaust Education – (9 hours, 2 teachers)
6. One teacher serves as the President of KCTE, one as secretary of GLEC and one as treasurer of GLEC, two will speak at the November NCTE convention, two will speak at the GLEC Omnibus conference.

Math Department

1. Graphing Calculator Workshop – (3 hours, 4 teachers)

2. Geometers Sketchpad – (6 hours, 5 teachers)
3. National Council of Teachers of Math Convention – (12 hours, 2 teachers)
4. Integrating Math and Science – (9 hours, 3 teachers)
5. Kentucky Council of Teachers of Math Conference – (3 hours, 2 teachers)
6. Four teachers presented inservices on technology in the math classroom for the Archdiocese of Louisville, two teachers presented Teaching Math in the Block at the GLCTM conference, one teacher is a consultant for the state with the Partnership for Reform Initiatives in Science and Mathematics funded by the National Science Foundation, one teacher is the Outstanding Secondary Teacher for GLCTM.

E3. How does the school tailor professional development and support to take account of differences in career experience or professional responsibility?

Beginning teachers are part of the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program. Each intern is given a supervising teacher within the building who has been trained as a KTIP resource teacher. This resource teacher spends 20 hours in the intern's classroom and 50 hours outside of the classroom with the intern during the first year. In addition, the intern is assigned to one administrator in the building and one teacher educator who observes the intern three times and holds three meetings with the intern, administrator and supervising teacher. KTIP is a state-mandated program that Assumption, as a private school, voluntarily adheres to. Teachers new to Assumption are given a mentor, a successful teacher at Assumption who meets certain criteria and is selected by the principal, who conferences with the new teacher for 20 hours, meets weekly to go over plans for the week and observes two classes. In addition, all new teachers are inserviced on teaching in the block, working with students with disabilities and using technology in the classroom. Teachers new to Assumption have two additional days of inservice before school begins. New teachers also meet with the principal, dean of studies, dean of students, counselors, librarian, technology coordinator, learning differences director, campus minister and the retreat director during the first eight weeks to ensure that they become a part of the culture of the school.

Experienced teachers very often provide the inservice for the faculty. When the school adopted block scheduling, one of the teachers was asked to be the block scheduling resource person. She attends conferences on block scheduling, keeps up with newly published material, visits Internet sites and shares this information with the faculty through inservice, at faculty meetings and in the faculty bulletin. In addition, she assists teachers who are having difficulty teaching in the block, and uses other faculty members as resources. Each department has a department chair who is chosen based on her education, years of service, professional involvement and leadership abilities. Each department also has a TPOC (Technology Point of Contact) who works with the technology coordinator to disseminate information about using technology in the different disciplines. Two English teachers provide inservice for new English teachers during the summer. The Teacher-Advisor Program inservices were provided by the counselors, two teachers and the dean of studies. Excellent teachers are also rewarded when the school pays for continuing education opportunities. For example, the theology department chair spent three weeks in Rome, Italy studying the Catholic faith and the lives of the saints.

Teachers are provided release time to share their expertise with other professionals in other schools and at conferences and conventions. (See I2)

Staff members attend many of the inservices provided for the faculty such as Using the Internet, The Internet and the Teacher-Advisor Program. (See E2) In addition, specific opportunities are provided for a variety of staff members and they are given paid release time to attend:

1. Using Win School (40 hours, 3 staff)
2. Archdiocesan Personnel Day (6 hours, 5 staff)
3. Fund Raising and Development in the Secondary School (3 hours, 3 staff, 2 administrators)
4. Wellness and Health (6 hours, all staff)

5. Using Office 97 and Win School (5 hours, all office staff)
6. CASE Conference for Development (40 hours, 1 staff)
7. Priority Management (6 hours, 5 staff, 3 administrators)

Administrators and counselors are required to obtain 42 clock hours of ELITP credit every two years. Paid release time is available for these hours as well.

E4. How does your school use the processes and results of student assessment, staff evaluation, and school review to support professional growth? How has teacher professional development improved teaching?

Each experienced teacher is observed twice a year by the department chair and once by an administrator. (For new teachers see E3) Each observation is followed up with a conference that focuses on strengths and growth areas. Teachers also may request that an administrator observe them any time during the year. Each year teachers are required to observe another teacher in the building and fill out an official peer observation form that indicates what the teacher learned during this observation. The principal conferences with each teacher at contract time.

Students evaluate all of their teachers annually. Teachers are asked to set improvement goals based upon these evaluations. A senior exit survey regarding school programs and departments also provides necessary feedback. At the end of the first year of block scheduling, a survey of the faculty and student body was administered. This survey indicated that 99% of the teachers preferred the block schedule to the 7-period day; 84% of the student body preferred the block schedule. Teachers did a minimum of 13 hours of inservice in block scheduling before the block was implemented. It is easy to see that professional development led to the high approval rating. Students felt, however, that teachers did not provide adequate movement in their classes so that is a focus of the block scheduling inservice this year.

The principal recognizes individual teachers and their accomplishments in the weekly faculty bulletin and at faculty meetings. Teachers are recognized over the P.A. for their accomplishments and those of their students. The Spotlight Bulletin Board recognizes teachers' accomplishments. Teachers receive recognition and positive feedback from administrators and department chairs during classroom observation follow-up conferences. Teachers serve on evaluation teams for other schools. Teachers are given released time to present at conferences and workshops. They are encouraged to join professional organizations and given the financial means and released time to become actively involved. (See E3)

F. LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATIONAL VITALITY

F1. How does leadership move your school toward its vision? How is the instructional leadership role defined and implemented? What other leadership roles are considered important and how are these defined and carried out? How are resources aligned with goals?

The primary goal of Assumption High School is to educate the whole person in a caring, Christian environment. The principal and assistant principals are committed to this vision and work together to provide the opportunity for each student to develop as a TOTAL PERSON. Weekly team meetings are a priority and are used to discuss present issues and concerns, as well as future plans for improvement in all areas of the school.

Academic excellence begins with providing the best teachers possible. The administrators believe that a school is only as strong as its teachers, and to this end have invested time and the financial resources to become certified Teacher Perceivers. This certification allows them to use the Selection Research Institute's teacher interview which identifies teacher talent in twelve areas important to the teaching profession. Department chairs are also involved in the selection of teachers. Instructional leadership is a shared responsibility between the administration and teachers. The administrators keep department chairs aware of the latest educational research as well as current state and other accreditation requirements.

Curriculum committee and department chair meetings, chaired by the dean of studies, are in place. (See E1)

To provide for the personal and emotional needs of the students an additional counselor was added to the guidance department this year. This counselor spends 50% of her time as a student assistance counselor and the other 50% coordinating the School-to-Career Program which is being implemented this year to help students prepare for the next stage of their lives. Other members of the department include two student assistance counselors and one college counselor. The strong commitment to the spiritual growth of the students is evident by the presence of a full-time retreat director and a part-time campus minister, both with clerical assistance. A four-year overnight retreat program is identified by alumnae as one of Assumption's greatest strengths. The retreat and campus ministry programs help create the caring, Christian environment present throughout the school.

Involvement of students in extra- and cocurriculars is another priority. The principal supports this priority by providing a part-time student activities director and a full-time athletic director. Support for involvement in the arts is evident by the presence of talented art, drama and music directors.

Service learning is another vital part of the growth and development of students. Two teachers have a decreased class load to coordinate this program. (See Part VI)

The awareness that technology is revolutionizing education has caused the school's leadership to allocate funds in the annual budget to maintain current technology and to provide for ever-changing technology needs. The 1997-98 annual budget allocates \$207,424 to technology. Of this total, \$128,957 impacts instruction directly. (See B3)

Leadership positions that have been added during the last three years include a director of human resources and administrative services, an administrative assistant and a part-time block scheduling resource person. The main responsibility of the director of human resources is to serve as a liaison between the support staff and the administration and to assist with hiring, supervising and evaluating all support staff. The administrative assistant is responsible for the bookstore, parking assignments, school uniforms, the student I.D. program, locker assignments, health and safety programs and classroom supplies. The block scheduling resource person provides assistance to teachers as they adjust to teaching in a block schedule and a student-centered learning environment. (See E3) The learning differences director is responsible for providing inservice for all teachers and collaborates on a regular basis with teachers who have students with special needs in their classroom. (See A5)

The school's annual budget provides the financial resources needed to support the mission of the school. The school has operated with a balanced budget throughout the principal's 16 years of service. The budget process is coordinated by the business manager and initially involves the administrators, department chairs, managers, directors of special programs and the technology coordinator. They each submit a proposed operating budget for the following school year, including equipment and technological needs. The most recent strategic plan is reviewed by the principal and the business manager and budgetary items, including salaries and financial aid, are identified. A balanced budget is then developed and submitted to the finance committee of the Board of Directors. The chairperson of the finance committee and the business manager present the final draft to the Board of Directors for approval. The budget is then submitted to the Sisters of Mercy Leadership Team for final approval. The school communicates its financial management to parents, alumnae, and others by means of an Annual Report.

F2. Who participates in the leadership of your school? How does the school engage its internal and external stakeholders in leadership and decision making? What is the relationship between the principal and stakeholders?

All stakeholders participate at some level in the leadership of the school. Six teachers, selected by their colleagues, the director of human resources, the campus minister and a representative from the guidance department serve on the Faculty Advisory Board. This Board serves as a channel of communication between the faculty and the administration and assists the principal in making decisions that affect the faculty. Suggestions, ideas, questions and concerns of the faculty are presented to the principal by this Board. Students have a similar avenue through the Student-Faculty Advisory Board. (See A3) The principal recently approved the formation of a Support Staff Advisory Board that would serve as a channel of communication between support staff and the administration and assist them in making decisions that affect the support staff.

Parents serve on the School Improvement Council. This council approves the school's goals and objectives that are established as part of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools renewal process. Parents also have various opportunities to attend meetings and ask questions. Some examples are Parent-Teacher Conferences twice a year, annual parent nights with the counselors, orientation for freshman parents, and meetings to explain and discuss the curriculum, block scheduling and the present and future use of technology in the classroom. Parents are surveyed on a regular basis to determine their degree of satisfaction in all areas of their daughter's education. The results are used in developing school improvement plans. The strategic planning process completed last year involved parents, alumnae, students, teachers, staff, administrators, representatives from the community, board members and the Sisters of Mercy. The Board of Directors consists of the principal, parents, alumnae, members of the larger community and Sisters of Mercy.

Students are involved in the evaluation of their teachers (See A1). Faculty and staff complete written evaluations of the administrators on a regular basis. The administrators use the results in developing their plans for continued growth and improvement.

The last two graduating classes completed a comprehensive evaluation of the curriculum, cocurricular activities, retreat and service learning programs, counseling and other student services. The results are shared with the faculty through their department chairs and then used in developing the school's plan for improvement.

Due in part to the principal's length of service and her collaborative but direct style of leadership, the relationship between the principal and other participants in school leadership is clear.

F3. What kind of school improvement process is in operation at your school? How was the Self-Assessment for the Blue Ribbon Schools Program developed and how did this initiative relate to other school improvement and planning efforts?

Assumption's school improvement process is driven by strategic planning initiated by the Board of Directors, and participation in a school renewal process required by its accreditation agency, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). During the 1995-96 school year a five-year strategic plan was developed with extensive input from all of the school's stakeholders (See F1). This plan identifies goals and objectives in the areas of curriculum, staffing, facilities, governance and finance. Committees are in place to implement the plan over the next five years. During the 1996-97 school year, Assumption completed the final year of Southern Association's five-year school renewal process. This process focused on school improvement in the following areas: School Climate, Planning, Staff Development, Curriculum and Instruction, and Communication. Parents, students, faculty, staff, and a college educator were represented on the steering committee. In spring of 1998, a committee from SACS will visit

Assumption to verify the school's reported progress in the areas mentioned above. In addition, the school just completed a two-year review for sponsorship by the Sisters of Mercy.

The strategic planning and school renewal processes, as well as the recommendations contained in the recent publication, *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, have prepared the school for the Blue Ribbon Schools Program Self-Assessment. A team of individuals, including administrators, teachers, other staff, students, parents, and a community representative have been extensively involved in the preparation of this Self-Assessment. In addition to the individuals listed on p. 2 of this report, 50 faculty members spent approximately four hours answering the questions from Part V that were assigned to their departments.

Completing this Self-Assessment has helped identify and measure the efforts and results of the school improvement processes in place at Assumption.

F4. How does your school leadership use the most current information about education to promote continuous improvement in your school? How does such evidence influence decision making?

In response to current educational research and using *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution* as a guide, Assumption has made the following improvements:

1. An alternating day 8-period block schedule was implemented in the 1996-1997 school year. The faculty adopted block scheduling because it provides a better environment in which to implement outcomes-based education, performance-based assessment, student-centered classrooms, cross-curricular study and increased graduation requirements. The decision to move to an alternative schedule was arrived at after extensive study of the current literature, attending presentations and conferences and visiting schools using the block. The curriculum committee presented the idea to the faculty and it was unanimously accepted. Extensive inservicing and further research into its effectiveness continues today. (See E2) Teachers have had to make two major changes in their teaching because of the block. They have had to look at depth as opposed to breadth and develop new teaching methods for the 85-minute period.
2. A Teacher-Advisor Program was implemented in the 1997-1998 school year in response to the fear that students would not feel that they belonged at Assumption. (See A2)
3. A School-to-Career Portfolio is part of the Teacher-Advisor Program; this portfolio provides a personal plan for each student as they progress through Assumption. (See A2)
4. Due to block scheduling, teachers use a variety of strategies within each class. They have been trained in Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, cooperative learning, best practices in their fields, the use of technology in the classroom and other methods that provide a student-centered classroom. Teachers at Assumption function as coaches and facilitators of learning. (See B2, 3, 5).
5. Technology has become a central part of the learning process and the budget allocations. (See C4-5)
6. Teachers have been trained in and are using portfolio and performance-based assessment in addition to traditional testing to gain a complete picture of students' abilities.

F5. What is your vision for integrating technology into your school, including benchmarks that guide your plans, problems that must be overcome, and training approaches? To what extent and how is technology used to improve management efficiency and effectiveness?

One management technology goal that has been achieved is to use one student and employee database, Chancery Software's Win School, to track employee and student data. With this program, information or changes can be entered once and then immediately accessed from any computer in the building. Teachers and staff can access the database to find out if a student is absent or has left early. They can view and print student and faculty personal data and scheduling information. Administrators and counselors have access to pertinent health and discipline records and the schedule is set up in this program. The information generated by the database allows personnel to monitor and track student progress. For example, the attendance module can easily and quickly track student absences and tardies which allows

the dean of students to spot patterns of absenteeism and correct them on an individual basis. The database also tracks grades, GPA and class rank. All computers have been updated to Office 97 and Windows 95.

The technology coordinator is currently implementing an Intranet in the school. This will keep Assumption on the cutting edge of information exchange. By publishing electronically instead of the traditional paper medium, the information the school accesses will be more efficient and cost effective.

F6. As you look back over the last five years, what conditions and/or changes have contributed most to the overall success of your school?

An eight-period rotating block schedule was implemented in the 1996-97 school year. Students now are able to take seven courses each year rather than six which makes the increased graduation requirements and electives both possible. Block scheduling allows more class time for experiments, projects, and activities, which means that students are more actively involved in their learning. In addition to the increased learning and thinking time for students, teachers now have more time to teach and actually interact with the students. With this new schedule, each department has increased its offerings. Students can easily find something that interests them. The number of clubs and organizations has also increased to meet the needs of a larger student body.

Another important change in the last five years is the construction of the Arts and Sciences wing. This has provided more classroom space as well as state-of-the-art laboratories for science experiments and demonstrations. The use and availability of cutting-edge technology is also a great improvement. Two full-time year-round employees devoted entirely to technology support and training have been added. (See C4)

Some new programs have also been developed to meet the needs of a growing community. The Teacher-Advisor Program and the School-to-Career Program help students identify their interests and abilities so they can make responsible decisions about career goals and appropriate preparation for achieving them. (See A2, B1)

The athletic program has been expanded as well. An intramural program has been successfully implemented involving student and faculty teams. (See A4) The volleyball team was ranked first in the nation in 1996 and has won the state championship four of the past five years.

F7. What do you consider the major educational challenges your school must face over the next five years and how do you plan to address them?

As the number of students attending Assumption continues to grow, the major challenge is to provide adequate space for them, the teachers and staff, and for the new programs that will need to be developed. The most recent strategic plan addresses this by including the addition of a multi-purpose building within the next five years. A planning committee is in place to study and make recommendations for the interim period. Another challenge is to continue to personalize the educational program for each student as the school's enrollment continues to increase. A Teacher-Advisor Program is being implemented this year to address this concern. (See A2) A third educational challenge is keeping up to date technologically. To address this challenge, the school now has a full-time technology coordinator and a full-time assistant and provides inservice opportunities for teachers. This summer, all teachers were required to attend a six-hour inservice on using technology in the classroom. A significant portion of the school's annual fund is used to purchase computer hardware and software.

G. SCHOOL, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

G1. What are the goals and priorities of your school, family, and community partnerships? How have your school and community improved as a result of these partnerships and how did you measure the improvements?

The goals and priorities of the school are addressed throughout this Self-Assessment instrument. The primary goal of the school is to educate the whole person (See A1). The school's success begins with its internal partnerships. These partnerships include the ways in which teachers, students, and others in the school relate to one another. They continue through the connections the school has with parents, community agencies, local businesses, neighbors and others outside the school. Based on the results of a parent survey in March 1995, and feedback from visitors to the school, Assumption is a place where students and teachers respect one another. It is a friendly, warm and welcoming place.

Parents are considered partners in their daughters' education (See G2). The results of the 1995 parent survey indicate that 96.6% of those who responded are satisfied with the school.

Teachers collaborate with one another to share ideas, plan their lessons and offer each other support. The 1995 teacher survey indicated that 91.3% of them are satisfied with the school, and 97.8% of them can talk to administrators easily.

A well-developed annual giving program is in place to solicit contributions from alumnae, parents, teachers, and other individuals and organizations in the community. The annual fund supports the school's financial assistance and technology programs. For the past five years the school surpassed its annual fund goal making it possible to meet financial assistance and technology goals.

Every student is required to participate in a service learning program during the second semester of the sophomore year (See Part VI). A School-to-Career Program is being implemented this year, pairing each junior with a person in the business community. (See B1)

Assumption has entered into a partnership with Iglou, a local Internet provider. Iglou provides free ISDN line connectivity to the school 24 hours a day and free accounts to all teachers and staff for their homes. In return, Assumption provides a lab and a teacher for Iglou's customers to learn about the Internet and creating Web pages. This Internet partnership keeps both Assumption's and Iglou's expenditures down while both profit from the cooperative venture.

G2. How does your school involve families in their children's education?

In educating the whole person, Assumption realizes that the families of students are an important part of the learning process. A Mock Schedule Night is held in September so parents can meet the teachers and learn more about their daughters' classes. All teachers are required to prepare a syllabus that includes course objectives and policies. Most teachers require that course syllabi be signed by a parent. Progress reports are mailed to parents at mid-semester. These are followed up by parent-teacher conferences. Report cards are mailed to parents at the end of each semester. The learning differences director has progress reports completed every three weeks for all students in her program. All athletes have a weekly grade check. In addition, all parents can request bi-weekly progress reports. Teachers are required to call parents of students who have a 'D' or an 'F'. Families are also contacted by the counselors when a personal matter needs to be discussed. The parents of each student are required to sign a form stating that they have read and agree that their daughter will be governed by the policies in the student-parent handbook.

Parents find out about school happenings through the *Inside Wire*, a publication they receive five times a year. Families are invited to participate in liturgies and workshops such as the Affective Skills seminar, computer training, and art classes for parents and other members of the community. Parents play an important role in the retreat program by giving talks to students on retreat about parent-teenager relationships, and writing letters to their daughters each year when they go on retreat. Parents are invited to a meeting at the school while their daughters are on retreat. They learn about the retreat their daughters are experiencing. They also have an opportunity to participate in shared prayer. There is also a parent

night for families of sophomores participating in the service program. Other opportunities for family involvement include the Father-Daughter Dance, academic and athletic banquets, Freshman Parent Orientation and liturgy, parents' nights with counselors, Junior Ring ceremony, and senior Mother-Daughter breakfast.

As significant amounts of homework are expected of students, Assumption relies on parent support to help the student meet high expectations. The homework boxes in each classroom allow students to get the work they missed on the day they return to school. The policies concerning work missed for absences and late work are in the handbook.

Parents often act as guest speakers in their professional field. They will have the opportunity to participate in the School-to-Career Program as professional mentors.

Parent input is frequently elicited. When Assumption was considering block scheduling, parents participated in the decision-making process. Parents are also involved in strategic planning and serve on the School Improvement Council. (See F3) At the beginning of each school year parents are encouraged to become involved in the Rocket Parent Association. Activities of this organization include fund raising events, Open House, the Academic Banquet, teacher appreciation day, and parent forums. Assumption also has a Parent Network that organizes and provides a directory of parents who make a commitment to supervise teenagers in their homes and set safe standards.

G3. How does the school support the needs and concerns of families?

The needs and concerns of families are determined in many different ways at Assumption. Parents complete surveys, serve on strategic planning committees, share their concerns at meetings conducted by the administration, the guidance department, the technology coordinator, the retreat director and the learning differences director. Parents complete a written evaluation at the end of most meetings. The results are used to identify needs and to improve the quality and content of future meetings.

The school supports the needs and concerns of parents whose daughters have ADD, ADHD and other learning differences through the services offered by a full-time learning differences director. (See G2) The school provides parent education programs in many areas. (See G2) During the 1996-97 school year, a nationally known author and speaker was brought in to address parents' concerns about teenage dating, love and sex. The college counselor provides an annual meeting to help parents with the college application process, including how to access financial aid for college. An annual meeting explaining NCAA requirements is offered for parents of athletes. Families who cannot afford the full cost of tuition can apply for financial assistance. An average of 120 families receive tuition assistance each year. Parents needing assistance with transportation can access carpool connections through the school secretaries.

G4. How does your school collaborate with community members and organizations for the benefit of families, students, and the school? From a reciprocal perspective, how do school-community partnerships benefit the community?

All sophomores participate in ACTS, a service learning program, where they serve in one of approximately 80 different agencies in the community. (See Part VI) The YES program is a voluntary extension of the sophomore service learning program, and the junior theology course has an additional 30 hour service requirement. Teachers arrange to have guest speakers from the community in their classes on a regular basis. They also take students on field trips in the community. Junior Achievement works weekly in partnership with the Applied Economics class. Sophomores enrolled in the Leadership class, a new course this year, are paired with students from Bellarmine College who serve as their mentors. In collaboration with Bellarmine, students can earn dual credit in eleven courses. The school is currently involved in a pilot program with Bellarmine that offers college credit for our newspaper and yearbook

classes. Bellarmine College, the University of Louisville, and Spalding University place students at Assumption to observe classes and complete their student teaching requirements. Representatives from colleges and universities are given the opportunity to recruit our students by being available during lunch periods. The National Honor Society sponsors a career fair every two years. Representatives from the community are invited to participate and share information about their careers. The Red Cross Club organizes a bloodmobile each year. Local attorneys assist the Mock Trial Team. The Easy Breathers, a local support group for people with asthma, hold their monthly meetings at Assumption.

The Beta Club and National Honor Society each require service hours of their members, and some foreign language students teach language skills to young children in a neighboring grade school. SHOL peer leaders interact with grade schools to model positive personal choices. Seventh and eighth graders are invited to a math and science day. Students raise money to help needy children at Christmas, support the homeless, and a mission sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy. The Future Business Leaders of America Club works with mentors in the business community. The Environmental Club participates in the Bear Grass Creek Clean Sweep and coordinates the school-wide recycling program. Every school day begins with a prayer, remembering the needs of the local community, as well as the needs of our world.

The partnerships described above create benefits for all involved. Businesses and other community organizations benefit from the services provided by the students, their energy and enthusiasm. They also receive the satisfaction of knowing they have contributed to the education of many young women in their community. Assumption students experience what it is like to contribute to the larger community in which they live and go to school. They learn that they can make a difference, their opinions count, and their contributions are useful and needed. They learn from experience that they have a responsibility beyond their own needs and interests.

G5. How are educational resources in the school and the community used to extend learning opportunities for students, teachers, and families?

Students are given the opportunity to travel abroad with teacher chaperones during the summer. Closer to home, U.S. history students are taken on a tour of downtown Louisville that focuses on local history and architecture. Humanities students are required to attend two community cultural events during the school year and also take a field trip to access a community cultural event. Foreign language classes have exchange student programs, and students participate in the Kentucky Youth Association and Kentucky United Nations. Math and science classes have gone on a field trip to a local amusement park and then conducted experiments and calculations regarding the rides there. The athletic department offers camps in several different sports. Computer, art, and Affective Skills workshops are offered for parents and/or school-age children, and the national championship volleyball team has traveled to Germany and Russia. Students are informed about and encouraged to apply for the Governor's Scholar's Program and the Governor's School for the Arts. Some student leaders are sent to the Christian Leadership Institute, and students in the Death and Dying theology class write children's books and share them with students at a local grade school.

Through Channel One students are able to view a 12 minute news program designed for teenagers four days a week, and teachers have access to the educational programs provided by Channel One. Every classroom is equipped with a television and VCR as part of the school's agreement with Channel One. AHS has been a frequent home of Omnibus, a local English/language arts conference, and the board of the Greater Louisville English Council has met at AHS for several years.

The School-to-Career Program is being implemented this year with the juniors. This gives them the opportunity to use community resources in order to learn about a particular career and is based on an integration of academics and career counseling. (See B1)

Assumption has entered into a partnership with Iglou, a local Internet provider. (See G1)

H. INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

H1. What is the overall philosophy and approach to assessment at your school? What are your assessment methods and how do these align with your educational mission and curriculum? Is there a balance among multiple methods? What questions about the assessment program is your school currently addressing as you seek continuous improvement?

Great attention has been given to assessment in the last several years. The student-parent handbook contains specific information about how grades are derived, and a consistent school-wide grading scale is in place. In an effort to combat “grade inflation” and provide the opportunity for grades to give students accurate feedback on their performance, consistent weighting policies have been implemented this school year. In all advanced and honors 1 classes, 70% of a student’s grade is derived from tests and major assessments while 30% comes from homework and other class activities. This shifts to 60%-40% on the honors level and 50%-50% on the academic level. Exams are given at the end of each semester to help students prepare for college.

A big part of the school’s mission is to ensure that “every student every day learns and grows and feels good about herself.” Therefore, educating the “whole person” means that assessment activities must be varied and challenging yet fair. Students take learning styles inventories, and the faculty has had training in multiple intelligences and performance assessment. Alternative assessments are common since varied ways of knowing require varied ways of demonstrating what is known. For instance, portfolios are used in English, journalism, and math, and students are taught self-assessment skills. Exit instruments are being developed in science. Group and individual presentations, discussions, projects, and performances are common in all content areas and are even more frequent since the advent of the block schedule. Collaboration and cooperation among students is encouraged. The faculty has worked on the development of appropriate rubrics for performance tasks, and two English teachers did an inservice on this topic for interested faculty at the end of September. Some years ago, the English department developed standard writing and speaking rubrics that can be used by any teacher in any discipline. In addition to these types of outcome-based assessments, teachers still include traditional testing as part of their assessment strategies. Practice with multiple choice and other objective questions prepares students for the standardized tests they must take. Assumption seeks for a balance in assessment modes in all disciplines. All faculty members will continue to grapple with the tension that can exist from being both a school that emphasizes academic rigor as well as one that seeks to develop self-esteem. Effectively educating the “whole person” will continue to be Assumption’s call.

H2. How do you use assessment results to understand and improve student and school performance? How does your use of assessment data contribute to making issues of quality part of the everyday conversation at your school? How does data influence decision making?

a. What assessment data do school administrators and teachers use on a regular and systematic basis and for what purposes?

Assumption uses the results of standardized tests when making decisions about programs and students. The results of the PLAN, ACT, PSAT and SAT are used to assess the school’s success in preparing students for the standardized testing situations necessary for entrance to college. The students’ math and science reasoning scores on the ACT were slightly below the national norm for the past four school years; therefore, changes were made in the program to remedy this situation. ACT prep classes are offered before each testing day. In addition, the math and science curricula were revised to include testing situations and questions similar to those on the ACT. Both departments revised their curriculum to ensure that the depth necessary for standardized testing was incorporated. The math department also instituted a summer review of Algebra I for all students moving from sophomore Geometry to junior Algebra II. These improvements were effective; the ACT math and science scores for the class of 1997 were at or above the national norm.

Freshmen are given a multiple intelligences inventory and a learning styles inventory in October. These results become a part of their School-to-Career Portfolio and are used by the teachers to plan effective lessons to meet the needs of the students.

Surveys are another method of assessment that Assumption uses to collect data. (See E4)

b. What assessment data are communicated to parents and the community and for what purposes? What assessment data are communicated to students and how does the school ensure that students understand the standards by which their performance is judged?

Progress reports and report cards are mailed home. (See G2) Results of all standardized tests are returned to the students and explained to them in group meetings and one-on-one in teacher advisor sessions. For all performance and portfolio assessments, students are given a rubric in advance so they know how their performance will be judged. In addition, a systematic method of averaging grades was instituted this year so students will understand the method teachers use to assign grades. Standardized test score averages are published on the school's profile sheet.

c. What specific improvements have been made in school policies and practices as a result of your analysis and use of assessment data?

(See above and E4)

H3. If your school administers standardized tests developed at the national, state or district levels to students, what are the results for the grade levels tested for each of the past FIVE years.

Standardized tests are given to sophomores and juniors in October. All juniors and advanced sophomore English classes take the PSAT/NMSQT; the remaining sophomores take the PLAN. In former years, freshmen took the NEDT; however, multiple intelligences and learning styles inventories were given beginning this year. (See H2a)

Five – Year Comparison of **PLAN** Scores
For all Sophomores **except** Advanced Levels
(Standard Score Mean)

Year	Number Students Tested	% of Cohort Class Tested	AHS Eng.	Nat'l Eng.	AHS Math	Nat'l Math	AHS Read.	Nat'l Read.	AHS Science	Nat'l Science	AHS Composite	Nat'l Composite
1996	254	68	18.3	16.5	17.6	16.5	17.9	16.0	18.5	17.0	18.1	16.6
1995	197	63.6	18.4	16.1	16.3	16.3	17.2	15.7	17.7	16.5	17.5	16.3
1994	192	64.1	17.6	16.1	16.6	16.3	16.8	15.7	17.8	16.5	17.3	16.3
1993	197	68.5	18.2	16.1	16.4	16.3	16.7	15.7	17.7	16.5	17.4	16.3
1992	188	68	18.2	15.2	16.7	15.2	18.4	15.6	17.6	16.4	17.8	15.9

Five - Year Comparison of **Advanced Placement Exams**

(AP Exams are given in May of each year in Biology, English Literature and Composition, French Language, U.S. Government and Politics, Calculus AB, Psychology, and Spanish Language)

Year	Number Tests Taken	Score 5	Score 4	Score 3	Score 2	Score 1
1997	132	10%	32%	28%	21%	6%
1996	102	8%	19%	46%	15%	9%
1995	88	19%	29%	30%	18%	2%
1994	84	9%	31%	43%	13%	1%
1993	98	18%	36%	44%	2%	0%

Four – Year Comparison of **PSAT/NMSQT** Scores for Juniors (Standard Score Mean)

YEAR	Number Students Tested	% of Cohort Class Tested	Verbal	Math
October 1996	209	99.5	47.9	47.7
October 1995	188	98.9	47.5	46.0
October 1994	185	98.4	48.1	43.7
October 1993	183	97.3	42.0	42.2

1992 recentered scores not available

Four – Year Comparison of **PSAT/NMSQT** Scores for Advanced Level Sophomores (Standard Score Mean)

YEAR	Number of Students Tested	% of Cohort Class Tested	Verbal	Math
October 1996	64	25.2	54.9	51.1
October 1995	60	28.0	55.1	52.6
October 1994	61	31.8	52.6	48.9
October 1993	60	30.5	45.4	45.1

1992 recentered scores not available

H4. What are the results of nonstandardized, or alternative, assessments of student performance developed at the school level?

All disciplines use some form of alternative assessment, and they have been very successful in allowing students to demonstrate what they know and can do in various modes that are comfortable for them. For instance, the English department relies on a portfolio created all four years to chart students' growth and give feedback on their progress in the writing skills taught. Every teacher includes a detailed rubric for how the portfolio will be graded in the syllabus that students and parents receive at the beginning of each class. This rubric has both "process" and "product" elements. At mid-semester in October, students assess their own portfolios on these "process" elements. These include students' achievement of goals, growth over time, use of the writing process, and risk-taking. Therefore, even students without advanced writing ability can do well because these process items are within reach of all students who want to do well. The teacher also assesses the portfolio using the same criteria, and the appropriate grade is given. A similar process is used at the end of the semester when the portfolio is completed, but at this time not only process but product elements that reflect appropriate mastery of the content, style, and surface features taught are included.

In social studies, simulations are a common way of assessing the material learned. For instance, in U.S. Government one teacher divided the class into the two houses of Congress with appropriate committee assignments. A bill was submitted and had to go through the entire process of becoming law. The

teacher taught all of the material then prepared her students for this assessment by giving them detailed information about how their contributions during the simulation translated into grades. With this in mind, the students knew what they needed to do to earn the grade they wanted, and it was easier for the teacher to determine what the students actually understood. These are just two examples of the many uses of alternative assessments at Assumption; there are examples in all disciplines for perusal by the site visitors.

H5. How do you ensure that all subgroups of students within your school achieve at high levels? What evidence is available of decreasing disparity among any subgroups in your school?

Assumption is a Catholic high school for girls and 97% of our students are Caucasian. Therefore we do not have any large subgroups within the school. The table below indicates the mean composite ACT score for the 3% of minorities enrolled in the past five years.

Year	African-American	Asian	Hispanic
1997	28	25	21
1996	NA	NA	NA
1995	NA	NA	15
1994	NA	16	18
1993	NA	NA	19

The most significant subgroup in the school are the students with specific learning disabilities and/or ADHD. (See A5) Traditionally, a standardized test score is not the most accurate measure of performance or success for students with these disabilities due to their difficulties with long-term memory, retrieval, and attention to task. In addition, these students are typically right-brain learners who have difficulty with multiple choice items. Therefore, test scores are not commensurate with their potential. A more accurate measure of performance for these students is GPA, a measure of classroom performance over time. The chart below illustrates the percentage of students with disabilities and their GPA for the past three years.

Year	3.00 – 4.00	2.00 – 2.99	1.00 – 1.99
1997	49%	49%	2%
1996	47%	48%	5%
1995	52%	41%	7%

H6. For high schools only: How have your students performed on PSAT, SAT and/or ACT college entrance examinations over the past five years?

ACT Scores

Year	Number Stud. Tested	% of Cohort Class Tested	AHS Eng.	Nat'l Eng.	AHS Math	Nat'l Math	AHS Read.	Nat'l Read.	AHS Science Reason.	Nat'l Science Reason.	AHS Comp.	Nat'l Comp.
1996-97	162	89	21.5	20.3	20.8	20.6	21.6	21.3	21.1	21.1	21.4	21.0
1995-96	180	97	21.7	20.3	19.6	20.2	22.0	21.3	20.7	21.1	21.1	20.9
1994-95	183	100	21.6	20.2	19.1	20.2	22.7	21.3	20.7	21.0	21.1	20.8
1993-94	205	98	21.4	20.3	19.1	20.2	21.8	21.2	20.5	20.9	20.8	20.8
1992-93	162	98.8	21.6	20.3	19.4	20.1	21.9	21.2	20.5	20.8	21.0	20.7

SAT Scores
(Standard Score Mean)

Year	Number Stud. Tested	% of Cohort Class Tested	AHS Verbal	Nat'l Verb.	AHS Math	Nat'l. Math
1996-97	90	49.0	522	505	514	511
1995-96	65	35.0	538	505	503	508
1994-95	129	70.5	520	504	474	506
1993-94	124	59.3	534	499	491	504
1992-93	71	43.3	569	500	507	503

H7. What were the students who graduated in Spring 1996 doing as of September 1997?

High Schools: Graduating class size	185
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	89.70%
Enrolled in a community college	8.10%
Enrolled in vocational training	.54%
Found employment	1.62%

These results are determined from records kept when seniors request their final transcripts be sent to the colleges in which they are enrolled.

H8. What qualitative and quantitative evidence is available of effective overall school performance?

a. What was your school's record for the last five years in the following areas which may serve as quantitative indicators of school climate and engagement?

	96-97	95-96	94-95	93-94	92-93
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
Student dropout rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Daily teacher attendance	99%	98%	98%	98%	98%
Teacher turnover rate	18%	18%	12%	11%	15%

b. What are the results of any surveys conducted by the school to measure the school climate and/or stakeholder satisfaction?

Assumption has conducted the following surveys in the last 3 years:

- 1997 – Block Scheduling Survey (See E4 for results)
- 1997 – Senior Satisfaction Survey – 90% approval rating
- 1996 – Senior Satisfaction Survey – 88% approval rating
- 1995 – Student Satisfaction Survey – 87% approval rating,
Parent Satisfaction Survey – 96.6% approval rating,
Teacher Satisfaction Survey – 95.7% approval rating

c. What was your school's record for the past five years in the areas of school safety, discipline, and drug prevention?

	96-97	95-96	94-95	93-94	92-93
Cutting school/class	.57%	.83%	1.78%	.38%	.89%
Expulsion from school	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Alcohol related problems	.23%	.12%	.25%	0%	.15%
Smoking on school property	.46%	1.07%	.13%	.13%	.45%

H9. Which awards received by your school, staff, or students are most indicative of school success?

The awards listed below were selected because they represent a variety of significant school, staff and student accomplishments.

1. The school received the Blue Ribbon Award for the second time in 1993.
2. Assumption is one of two high schools in the Archdiocese of Louisville to receive the Thomas Duerr award of Excellence in Catechesis for the third time in 1997.
3. Assumption was chosen by the Kentucky Department of Education to be one of 12 high schools in the state to help develop and implement a science portfolio project.
4. A teacher of French had her performance-based workshop selected by *Today's Catholic Teacher* magazine as the Diocesan Program of the Month.
5. A math teacher's calculus class was videotaped by KET, Kentucky Educational Television, as an illustration of using technology in the math classroom.
6. The 1996 volleyball team captured the state championship for the fourth time in five years. They were named the #1 high school volleyball team in the nation in 1996.
7. Assumption's 1995 and 1996 yearbooks were named All-American books by the National Scholastic Press Association.
8. A 1997 graduate was named Kentucky's top female high school youth volunteer in the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, a nationwide recognition program. The program honor young people across America for outstanding self-initiated community service activities.
9. Another 1997 graduate was named the female state winner in the 1996 Wendy's High School Heisman Award Program that recognizes a male and female senior for academic excellence, community service and athletic achievements.
10. An average of 35.6% of our 1993-97 graduates received college scholarships. The 1997 graduates set school records, with 41% receiving scholarships valued at \$2,670,786.

I. PREVIOUSLY RECOGNIZED SCHOOLS

I1. What changes and improvements have taken place since the school was last recognized?

An Arts and Sciences 11,300 sq. ft. wing was built in 1995. This addition, along with the purchase and renovation of a 2,000 sq. ft. home across the street from the school in 1994, have made it possible to accommodate a 16% increase in students over the last five years. The new Arts and Sciences Center includes an elevator that makes the entire school accessible to the physically handicapped. The school office was expanded in 1995 which allows the administration to meet the needs of students and staff in a more efficient and effective manner.

During the summer of 1996 a school-wide network was installed making it possible to access the Internet and the school's CD-ROM tower from every classroom. The technology coordinator now has a full-time technology assistant.

Assumption implemented a block schedule in 1996-97. This schedule provides students more academic success, better preparation for college and career, and more opportunities to take additional elective courses. Graduation requirements have increased from 24-28 credits.

In addition to the technology assistant position, the school has added a fourth counselor, a director of human resources and administrative services, an administrative assistant, a part-time block scheduling resource person, and increased the part-time director of support services for learning differences position to full-time. These additions made it possible to implement a School-to-Career Program this year. The director of human resources position makes it possible to meet the needs of the support staff more effectively. The addition of an administrative assistant makes it possible for the administrators to spend more time with students, teachers and parents.

A Teacher-Advisor Program has been implemented this year to ensure the continuation of a personalized educational program for each student.

The class load of English teachers was reduced from five to four classes. This allows them to incorporate the writing workshop in their classes more effectively.

Several new clubs and activities have been added, including a dance team, a service club, an American Technology Honor Society, and a more extensive intramural sports program. (See A4)

I2. Have you had any interactions with other schools to share some of your successful strategies and practices? If so, please elaborate.

Assumption willingly shares successful strategies and practices with other schools in the following ways:
1997-1998

1. The school is open to any other school that would like to observe the block schedule, learn how to implement or teach in the block. Collegiate, Trinity, DeSales and Owensboro Catholic high schools visited Assumption during September and October.
2. The principal and assistant principal shared information about the research on block scheduling and on implementing a block schedule at the Catholic High School's Principals' Forum.
3. The block scheduling resource teacher and another teacher have made presentations on teaching in the block at Mercy and Bethlehem high schools during July and November.
4. These two teachers also shared information about teaching in the block at the Ohio Catholic Educators Association in October.
5. The dean of studies shared moving to a block schedule with the assistant principals of the area's Catholic high schools.
6. The theology department chair made a presentation about teaching theology in the block at Trinity High School in October.
7. The learning differences director presented teaching the student with learning disabilities at St. Agnes Grade School.
8. The learning differences director and a counselor presented a program on providing for individual differences in the classroom for six area Catholic grade schools.
9. The technology coordinator trained the administration of Collegiate in Win School, the school management database.
10. The technology coordinator trained the faculty at the University of Louisville on using the Internet with students at risk.
11. The computer teacher and two English teachers shared using the Internet in the English classroom with the English department of St. Xavier High School.
12. The assistant principal shared the Teacher Advisor and School-to-Career Programs with assistant principals from DeSales High School and Sacred Heart Academy.

1996-1997

1. The principal shared with representatives from two local Catholic elementary schools the value of engaging in the Blue Ribbon application process as well as the many benefits to the school if it is named a Blue Ribbon School.
2. Two English teachers presented at the Kentucky Council of Teachers of English conference in February.
3. A math teacher presented at the Southeast Regional Conference of the National Council of Teachers of Math.
4. A French teacher was chosen by the PBS station, KET, to plan and present a series of professional development seminars on teaching Foreign Language.
5. A French teacher represented the Central States at the ACTFL Conference in Philadelphia.
6. Two math teachers presented "Around the Block with Block Scheduling" at the KCTM conference.
7. Three English teachers presented a three-day workshop on the Writing Workshop and Portfolios for the Archdiocese of Louisville.

1995-1996

1. Three English teachers presented a session on using the writing workshop in high schools at the KCTE convention.
2. One English teacher presented at the Teaching Shakespeare through Performance International Conference.
3. Assumption was chosen by the Kentucky Department of Education to be one of 12 high schools in the state to help develop and implement a science portfolio project.
4. An English teacher published "Going All the Way: A Workshop Approach to Literature Instruction" in the Kentucky *English Bulletin*.
5. An English teacher presented "Images: Gateway to Language Proficiency" at the annual Learning Disabilities Association Conference.
6. A math teacher presented at the Ohio Catholic Educators Association Convention.
7. A math teacher's calculus class was videotaped by KET as an illustration of using technology in the math classroom.

1994-1995

1. Three English teachers, one social studies teacher and the librarian presented at the Greater Louisville English Council's conference.
2. An English teacher presented a workshop entitled "Captivating Captions" at the Greater Louisville High School Press Day.
3. An English teacher spoke on the use of imaging at the International Learning Disabilities Conference.
4. Three English teachers presented a workshop on portfolios as a means of assessment at the KCTE convention.
5. A French teacher had her performance-based workshop selected by *Today's Catholic Teacher* magazine as the Diocesan Program of the month.
6. A student assistance counselor presented Race, Class and Gender Effects on Adolescent Academic Achievement at the American Research Association's Annual Conference.
7. A math teacher was selected as a consultant for the Partnership for Reform Initiatives in Science and Math.